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ABSTRACT

A study was made to determine whether a course in human sexuality conducted in a nonmoralistic manner, taught by a teacher considered by herself and her students as liberal concerning sexual matters, would change the values of these students. Pre- and post-instruction attitudes of students and teacher were measured on the topics of sexual philosophy, homosexuality, premarital sex, abortion, masturbation, living together, and birth control. An analysis of results indicated that the attitude of the teacher in these areas had little impact on student attitudes. (JD)

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PRE AND POST TEST EVALUATION OF STUDENTS' VALUES TAKING HUMAN SEXUALITY CLASSES AT UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

"Does Sex Education Change Students' Values?"

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It is almost impossible to teach health education and its diverse curriculum without facing the problem of confronting the values of both teacher and student. As one might assume, the area of sex education is prevasive with conflicts, questions and challenges centered around value issues. While recent gallop polls show that over three quarters of Americans support sex education in the schools,[1] the debate continues as to whom shall this educational responsibility be given? Can any instructor teach sex education without imposing his or her values upon students, or without compromising students' values that have originated in the home?

A pilot study by Woods & Mandetla indicated that following a course in human sexuality, given to undergraduate nursing students, knowledge scores improved, however "no correlation existed between liberalization of attitudes toward sexuality and completion of the course.[2] This finding was again varified by Hoch who studied 100 high school students in a biology sex education course. Hoch's results indicated that levels of permissiveness for both males and females did

not change significantly as a result of this course, but rather, gave students greater confidence in their ability to make "correct" decisions. Further, students tended to be less hostile and more accepting of people with sexual differences.[3]

Amid significant data to support and encourage the teaching of sex education,[4] those who oppose such instruction reiterate their fears that given knowledge, young people will become more permissive, there will be an increase in homosexuality, masturbation, abortion and preoccupation with sex.[5, 6, 7]

Right or wrong, good or bad, sex education continues in our public schools and in our universities, and it is hard to believe that its importance or significance will diminish. It is, therefore, necessary to explore its impact on the values of students. Gordon has noted that "values are a part of every subject." He continues, "It's tempting to introduce (sexuality) in a moralistic fashion, however it's not only illegal, but also unethical and morally corrupt. Moralistic means you try to impose your point of view on others, your religious or idiosyncratic point of view on everyone. That violates separation of church and state."[7]

Gordon's statement raised the question in my mind of whether a sex education class taught non-moralistically, presented in a manner that did not place religious emphasis on value issues, that promoted open discussion and the introduction of information about alterntives regarding such

topics as birthing, family planning, alternative sexual life-styles, abortion, masterbation and intimacy would change significantly the values of students.

Method

To assess the change in students values prior to being given sex education instruction and after 30 hours of instruction, a questionnaire was administered to 36 female and 20 male undergraduates attending the University of Utah. The questionnaire was given after two discussions of male and female anatomy. This was to give the students the opportunity to perceive the possible values of the instructor and to determine whether or not they would remain in the course.

The questionnaire measured three value areas: 1) pre-class and post-class perceived values of the professor; 2) pre and post values of the students and 3) and self-reported values of the instructor. The intent of gathering this data was to examine whether a professor, self-defined and perceived by students as liberal and conducting a sex education class in a non-moralistic manner would change the values of these students.

After the pre-questionnaire the class was taught using a lecture/discussion method. The major text was Psychology of Sexuality by Luria and Rose. The only media materials were two films, Mens' Lives, a discussion of sex role development of men in our society, and Rape! A Preventative Inquiry, a Rape Crisis film. Other visual materials includes examples of contraceptive devices, an overhead production of trans-

sexual surgery and overheads of human anatomy. Guests included a gay panal of men and women. Because of class size (over 80 students) there were only two opportunities for students to meet and discuss in small groups. All lectures were designed to draw factual and speculative information from both ends of a sexual philosphy continuum (conservative to liberal). Feminist, religious, legal and cultural implications were drawn on most issues. Students were free to disagree, raise issues and question the instructor. When posed with the questions, the instructor freely stated her own personal feeling, emphasizing that "students should not take everything said by me as appropriate for everyone. Each person must choose for him or herself what decisions will be made."

Results

Results of the pre and post questionnaire are given in Table 1. The instructor's personal choices (values) are put in parenthesis ( ). Analysis of significant changes from pre to post test were measured by means of Chi Square. Significant change is shown by use of the asterisk (*).

Sexual Philosophy

The instructor viewed herself as liberal, as did students pre and post test. Significance was shown in an increase in perception of instructor from pre to post test in conservatism and radicalism. The students showed no change in sexual philosphy from pre to post test.

TABLE I

X^2 significant at:
* = .01
** = .05
*** = .001

Perceptions of Sex Education Instructor and Self on Value Issues Pre and Post Instruction

N = 56

	Instructor		Self	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Sexual Philosophy				
Conservative	1%	5%*	12%	13%
Moderate	13	9	42	41
(Liberal)	82	75	46	46
Radical	3	11 *	0	0
Homosexuality				
Encourage	15	16	1	4
Critical	8	8	31	21
(Accepting)	69	54*	54	63
Mentally Ill	1	0	12	11
(Acceptable Lifestyle)	36	64*	10	21***
Premarital Sex				
Encourage	7	9	15	9
Critical	1	4	9	25**
(Accepting)	70	84*	67	71
Discourage - unhealthy	1	0	9	11
Helps some relationships	33	23	22	14

Table I
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	Instructor		Self	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Abortion				
Encourage	4%	7%	0%	0%
Critical	0	4	16	20
(Accepting)	46	48	22	48*
(Available to all)	52	61	40	41
Only Special Cases	4	13	37	34
Masturbation				
Encourage	37	30	6	14
Critical	1	2	15	15
(Accepting)	34	49	6	50***
Can be Abused	10	6	22	18
(Normal)	72	64	53	53
Living Together				
Encourage	7	9	7	4
Critical	4	7	24	27
(Accepting)	77	77	54	71*
Creates Unstable Relationship	0	4	9	12
Promotes Longer Marriage	15	20	15	15
Birth Control				
Not be Used	3	4	6	5
(All Ages)	49	59	32	52*
Encourages Promiscuity	6	9	1	20*
(Responsible Behavior)	55	73**	75	59**

Homosexuality

While the instructor saw herself as accepting of homosexual people, students perceived a significant decrease in this accepting attitude on the post test. There was a significant increase in students' acceptance of homosexuality as an alternative sexual lifestyle for others.

Premartial Sex

The instructor viewed herself as accepting of those who engage in premarital sex, and although students significantly saw the professor as more accepting post-test, there was a significant increase in critical feelings toward premarital sex by students post-test.

Abortion

No significant differences of the instructor regarding her acceptance of those who have had an abortion and her belief that abortions should be available to all women were noted by students. Students showed a significant increase in acceptance of women who have had an abortion.

Masterbation

A significant increase in accepting those who masterbate was shown by students.

Living Together

A significant increase in accepting those who live together out of wedlock was shown by students.

Birth Control

If there is any inconsistency in this study it is with this topic. Students increased their belief that birth control should be available to all ages who want it, but also showed an increased in their belief that birth control is a responsible behavior although they increased in their perception of the instructor's belief that brith control is a responsible behavior.

Discussion

The results of this study support the fact that giving young people information does not change their own personal values. Even with a professor who was admittedly and perceived to be liberal and accepting of various sexual alternatives, students were not swayed into being more encouraging of sexual differences. The most significant finding concurs with the results of Hoch's study, that students become more accepting of others differences when these differences are understood - not encouraging such behavior, but accepting of people.

A more critical attitude was discovered regarding premarital sex, although students did not see the professor as critical, but rather, accepting of those who engage in premarital sex. This finding may contradict the fears of those who think knowledge equates permissiveness. Apparently when given all sides, students were able to see the potential difficulties of premarital sex. It should be noted that premarital sex was neither encouraged or discouraged by the instructor in this class, but taught with the notion that for

every decision made, responsibility of any consequence, positive or negative must be assumed.

The question of conflicting results for birth control is unable to be assessed. These data may be the result of questionnaire construction or the result of the raging controversy in Utah regarding Planned Parenthood in Utah.[8]

It is the conclusion of this author, based upon the actual experience of teaching this class and conducting this research that the benefits of sex education, at least at the University level, far outweigh the perceived risks. It seems like a positive statement of sex education that students become more accepting of the differences of others, whcih in turn probably helps them become more accepting of themselves.

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